

## Marine Life Protection Act



# Commercial Fisheries in the North Central Coast Study Region: Perspectives from Fishermen

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## Information from Commercial Fishermen

**Background**: Fishermen on MLPA North Central Coast Regional Stakeholder Group volunteered to inform the RSG of relevant fisheries and how they operate.

Information requested by CDFG from commercial fishery & harbor interests on the RSG:

- 1. Description of fishing fleet by port
- 2. Highlight important fisheries in NCCSR
- Importance/relevance of fisheries to ports and harbors
- 4. Gear operations and habitat interactions
- 5. Spatial importance: Identify important fishing grounds, seasonal shifts



# **Fishermen Providing Information**

Information provided by several fishermen including:

- 1. Ed Tavasieff (San Francisco)
- 2. John Mellor (San Francisco)
- 3. Josh Churchman (Bolinas/Bodega Bay)
- 4. Tom Estes (Fort Bragg/Point Arena) (with input from Fort Bragg and Bodega fishermen)
- 5. Dirk Ammerman (Point Arena)



## Six Key Fisheries in NCCSR State Waters

- 1. Salmon
- 2. Dungeness Crab
- 3. Rockfish and nearshore finfish (rockfish, lingcod, cabezon)
- 4. California halibut
- 5. Sea Urchin
- 6. Pacific herring roe fishery (Tomales Bay)



# Salmon Troll Fishery

- Deeper than 15 fathom (90 feet) to 50 fathom (300 feet), sometimes shallower (to 10 fathom) in late season
- No bottom contact with gear although bycatch of midwater rockfish may occur



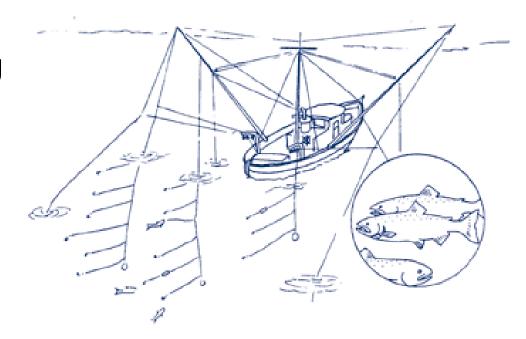


# Salmon Troll Fishery

## **Gear Type**

 Trolling - method of fishing using boat engine to pull lines and hooks through water column

- Out-riggers (long wooden or metal poles) on each side of the vessel, with 1-3 separated lines off each
- Each line 4-12 leaders per line (less in shallow water)





# Salmon Troll Fishery

#### **Key Issues**

- Salmon season different each year; recent seasons severely cut back
- Klamath River salmon abundance level current driving factor in season length
- Out-of-area fishermen (Fort Bragg, northern California, out-of-state) travel south to participate in more liberal season
- Entire study region used for salmon except very shallow water
- Access to fishing grounds below Point Arena identified as very important
- Many fishermen heavily depend on salmon income. Many also fish Dungeness crab.

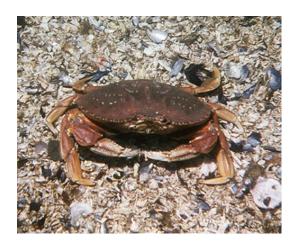






# **Dungeness Crab Trap Fishery**

- Inside 50 fm (300 ft) on sandy, muddy, or gravely bottoms
- Widespread fishing grounds throughout study region
- Crab abundance and location can change from year to year
- Bottom contact between gear involves trap placement on and retrieval from soft bottom habitat







# **Dungeness Crab Trap Fishery**

## **Gear Type**

- •Crab pots or traps (36" to 42" diameter)
- Set on the bottom, in a string (straight line) consisting of 30 to 150+ traps (no limit)
- Traps selective for larger individuals, with destruct device if gear lost

#### **Operation**

•Baited pot gear soaked for hours or days depending on weather conditions and crab abundance (3 days max legal soak time)





# **Dungeness Crab Trap Fishery**

- Crab season opens Nov 15, earlier than in areas north
- Recent effort shift to crab due to reduction in other fishery options
- Many vessels come from Eureka, Crescent City, Oregon and Alaska to fish in early season
- Small and big boat issues
- Access to fishing grounds below Point
   Arena identified as extremely important to ports, from Fort Bragg to Bodega Bay
- Crab is significant source of income for local fishermen





# **Nearshore Rockfish and Finfish**

- From 0 to 20 fm (120 ft)
- Nearshore rocky habitat, kelp beds
- Contact with bottom habitat occurs with some gear types





## **Nearshore Rockfish and Finfish**

## **Gear Types**

- Rod and reel
   Trap gear
- "Stick gear" (vertical longline)
- Longline

- Rod and reel several baited hooks.
   Bottom contact avoided.
- Longline gear lines set out and later retrieved. Anchor set on hard bottom, baited lines laid out to soak.
- Traps set on sea floor and retrieved; allows release of bycatch.
- Valuable live fish fishery







## **Nearshore Rockfish and Finfish**

- Restricted access fishery: Shallow nearshore and deeper nearshore
- Only 60% of permits actively fished in NCCSR in 2005-2006 (strict quotas, spatial closures (RCAs), Not everyone qualified for permits)
- Small quotas + high price/lb = good income serves as stop-gap between other primary fisheries (e.g., crab, groundfish, salmon)
- Spatial availability is concern residential rockfish, potential for localized depletion





## **California Halibut**

- Usually less than 30 fm to shore
- Sandy, muddy, or gravel areas
- Little bottom contact with fishing gear





## California Halibut

#### **Gear Type**

- Hook & line "Wire Lining" Rod and reel with stainless steel wire line (trolling or drifting)
- Gear fished just above the bottom

- Trolling just above the bottom. Pole and reel are held to maintain constant attention to changing bottom and current strength.
- Current conditions affect method:
  - Strong current: requires bait with plastic squid-like hoochies"
  - Weaker currents: Drifting with live bait and only 1 hook.



Wire lining also used for Pacific halibut (shown above)



## California Halibut

- Hook-and-line (H&L)-caught CA halibut is significant fishery in NCCSR
- Market for H&L halibut increased (fish quality)
- Nearly all H&L halibut in California are caught in NCCSR





# **Red Sea Urchin**

- Shallow subtidal
- Kelp forests and rocky habitat



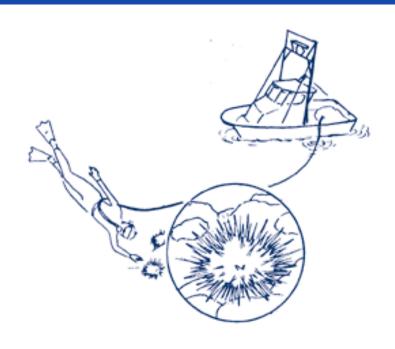


## **Red Sea Urchin**

## **Gear Type**

Diving on compressed air systems ("hooka")

- Divers hand-pick urchins
- Tool ranges from small metal hook to bionic arm







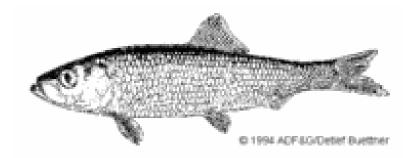
## **Red Sea Urchin**

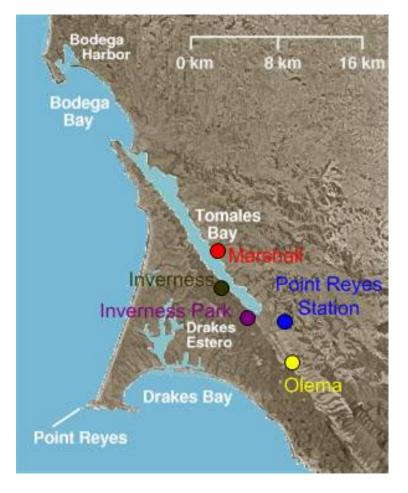
- Fishery activity depends on market demand and presence of a processor in the area.
- Good fishing habitat off Bodega Bay with no active fishery
- Active fishery reemerging in Point Arena



# Pacific Herring – Tomales Bay

- Shallow subtidal water inside the bay near spawning grounds
- Eel grass beds (where herring spawn) outer edges; most fishing has been south of Hog Island in recent years





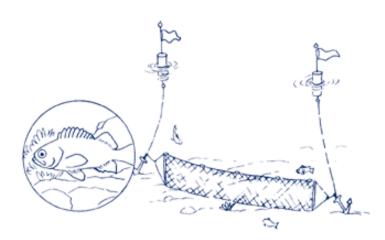


# Pacific Herring – Tomales Bay

## **Gear Type**

Set gill net

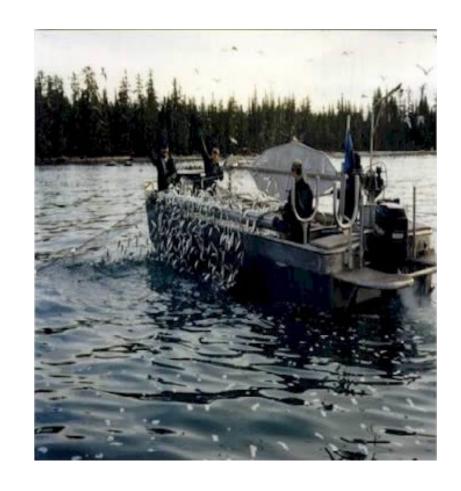
- Gill nets anchored with floats on ends. Fish swim into net when moving toward shallow spawning grounds.
- Fish are harvested and roe are extracted from females.
- Gear contacts seafloor along weighted line and anchored ends.





# Pacific Herring – Tomales Bay

- Spatial access to waters adjacent to eel grass beds vital for herring fishing.
- Herring spawning location changes each year and herring fishing locations with it.





# **Summary of Key Themes**

- Commercial fisheries are not the same Gear operations are different in each fishery
- Flexibility is key (spatial, temporal, regulatory shifts)
- It takes more than one fishery to make a fisherperson
- Consider each port's character/needs separately not just region-wide